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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA  
HQ USAF FOR XXXX  
DA WASHDC FOR SASA  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA  
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR  
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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[1](#)1. Security Fence

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Key stories in the media:  
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All media reported on missiles fired last night by IAF helicopter at a car carrying three senior activists in Islamic Jihad's military wing, causing their death. Among the three casualties was Said Abu Jedian, known as the "Kassam commander." According to Maariv's website, Abu Jedian was incarcerated by Israel from 1997 until 2002 and, upon his release, came to serve in a dominant capacity in Islamic Jihad's military wing in the northern Gaza Strip, focusing mainly on Kassam rocket fire. Israel Radio reports that at least five Kassam rockets were fired at Israel in apparent retaliation for the targeted killing operation, but it's believed that all rockets fell in open fields causing neither damage nor casualties.

Israel Radio reported this morning that last night the army arrested 11 Palestinians on the wanted list, most of them active members of Hamas. A Tanzim activist was arrested in Kalkilya. In the Bethlehem area a Hamas activist was arrested and nine others in Hebron and the surrounding area. Soldiers on an operation near Tulkarm came under fire but none of them were hit.

All media reported on Likud Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu demanding the immediate resignation of Likud ministers from the government, and instructing them to submit letters of resignation by this coming Sunday. Yediot Aharonot's front page assesses that the chairman fears increasing opposing to this step in his own party. Ministers Livnat, Shalom, Naveh and Katz have expressed their opposition to the resignation now, preferring to take this step only after the Likud primaries are held on January 17.

Maariv published this morning a denial by Kadima's chairman, Roni Baron, to a Maariv report yesterday (Monday) that PM Sharon is planning a "road map bang." Baron said that this report has no basis, and that "the only political plan at the moment is the road map." According to Maariv's report yesterday, the "road map bang" stipulates that in the absence of a partner in the PA, Israel will determine its eastern border with the Americans, who will act as a sort of custodian for the Palestinians, who will be able to establish a state with temporary borders within territory that will be evacuated. On the other hand, Shimon Peres admitted yesterday in an interview with the Russian Television RTV1 that "such a plan exists," though hastened to clarify that in any case it is better to wait until the PA election results before taking any measures on the matter. Peres said that what is being discussed is a period of transition and that we must build a partner on the Palestinian street, but added that if none should be found, then this plan can certainly take shape. Peres noted that in any case, the plan will not become a reality before the elections in Israel.

Yesterday, the Palestinian Authority and both ends of the political spectrum in Israel reacted angrily to the report of the plan.

Ha'aretz bannered with the Civil Administration's admission that illegal construction was approved in Upper Modi'in, after construction was already going on, to create facts on the ground.

Kol Israel reported this morning that during the night the army, the police and the Civil Administration evacuated an illegal settlement outpost near Hebron. The outpost, named Pnei Hever, was established in the past week.

Ha'aretz quoted Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas as saying Monday, in Qatar, he might delay upcoming parliamentary elections if Israel bars Jerusalem Arabs from voting. This was the first time that Abbas has indicated, in public, he might delay the January 25 vote. A Commander of Palestinian Police was also quoted as saying that the PA is incapable of holding elections. The Jerusalem Post reported that Israel's final decisions on East Jerusalem Arabs' vote will take place after consulting with two ranking U.S. officials. It's also reported that Elliot Abrams and David Welch are due in Israel Thursday, to discuss with both Israeli and PA officials the upcoming elections. Kol Israel reported this morning that the Palestinian parliament election campaign officially opened today. Palestinian organizations are expected to hold rallies in East Jerusalem even though the Israeli police have prohibited this.

Jerusalem Post reported that the Prisons Service has been ordered by the political echelon to ease restrictions on jailed Fatah Tanzim leader Marwan Barghouti and to allow him to hold routine political meetings in jail in the run-up to the Palestinian legislative elections.

All media reported that the security establishment has recommended to the prime minister that Israel evacuate the residents of the northern part of the village of Ghajar on the Lebanese border and erect a security fence along the international border with enhanced security facilities. A comprehensive discussion on the issue will be held on Wednesday at the Prime Minister's Bureau. An alternative proposal, not to evacuate the inhabitants but to enhance the security systems in the village, will also be considered. The proposal to evacuate the residents was submitted in the wake of the Hizbullah attack on the village about a month and a half ago, when the attackers attempted to abduct an Israeli soldier, and wounded 11 soldiers. Yediot assesses that PM Sharon will oppose the idea of dividing the village into two parts, and will support the military stands in strengthening security measures in the area.

#### ----- 1. Security Fence -----

##### Summary: -----

Conservative, independent The Jerusalem Post editorialized: "So long as the threat of terrorism remains clear and present, Israel has the right and responsibility to put the security of its citizens first, not the diplomatic concerns of other nations. Israel might point out to these nations that the fence, far from blocking the creation of a Palestinian state, is actually consistent with, and even likely to advance, that end."

#### Block Quotes: -----

##### 1. "Finish the Fence"

Conservative, independent The Jerusalem Post editorialized: "We have seen that the security fence is not a panacea, because it is possible for a bomber to get through crossing points in the fence, and because it will not stop missile attacks... The Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency), in the meantime, has pointed out that casualties from terrorism were down 60 percent in 2005: 45 killed compared to 117 in 2004. This improvement was attributed not to the fence, which had not been lengthened significantly over the past year, nor directly to Israeli military successes, but to the "cease-fire" implemented by the terrorist groups. During this year-long self-declared "truce," which in any case expired on Sunday, the IDF reports there were 2,990 terrorist attacks.... But it

is precisely because the improvement in security was attributed more to Palestinian fatigue than Israeli prowess that it is critical that our government not let its guard down. Under these circumstances, it is worth reviewing where the construction of the security fence stands. So far, about 200 km. have been built, roughly along the northern portion of the Green Line from the Jordanian border to the Petah Tikva area. Another 10 km. have been built north of Jerusalem and 10 km. more south of the capital. This leaves more than half of the barrier incomplete - about 350 km. have yet to be built. Less than 10 percent of the unbuilt sections are currently being contested in court. The Gush Etzion Local Council has been objecting to constructing the fence around that settlement bloc, out of concern that some settlements will be left outside. But neither court procedures nor local Israeli or Palestinian objections fully explain the fact that, far from being completed, the fence barely advanced in 2005. The existing sections were mostly built from mid-2002 through 2004....In the meantime, the most likely reason for delay is that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is reluctant to contend with the two most important critics of the fence's route, our High Court of Justice and the United States..... Again, though, less than 10 percent of the unbuilt barrier is being contested before our justices, and so the interventions of the court are no excuse for the wider delay. Similarly, American concerns about fencing in the settlement blocs should not be allowed to stop the fence from being built. So long as the threat of terrorism remains clear and present, Israel has the right and responsibility to put the security of its citizens first, not the diplomatic concerns of other nations. Israel might point out to these nations that the fence, far from blocking the creation of a Palestinian state, is actually consistent with, and even likely to advance, that end."

JONES